risk-free land as it was done in the past, for several such pockets of Defence open vacant lands;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (PROF. CHAMAN LAL GUPTA) : (a) to (c) The State Government of Andhra Pradesh had identified some isolated pockets of defence land in Secunderabad Cantonment for locating essential services like Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC), Andhra Pradesh State Electricity Board (APSEB), Bus Station and Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) Service in exchange of State Government equal value land. The State Government have not furnished details of land to be exchanged with Defence lands.

Army Award for present FM

3420. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the present Finance Minister has been selected for the award of a medal by the Army authorities;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the excellence for which this award is proposed to be given to a civilian who has not rendered any meritorious service in the battlefield ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (PROF. CHAMAN LAL GUPTA) : (a) to (c) The Army Headquarters had recommended for the award of a medal to the present Finance Minister. The recommendation of Army Headquarters did not find favour of the Competent Authority.

Demining of cultivable land in Rajasthan

3421. SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU) : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) the method used by the army to demine the cultivable land in the border areas of Rajasthan and other places;

(b) whether it is considered to be obsolete and time consuming;

(c) whether, due to slow demining operation in Rajasthan, the farmers are not getting back their land for farming purposes;

(d) the areas of cultivable land which are yet to be returned back to the farmers of Rajasthan; and

(e) the steps contemplated by Government to expedite the operation ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (PROF. CHAMAN LAL GUPTA) : (a) Mines are being recovered by a combination of manual, mechanical and explosive means.

(b) The methods used by the Army to de-mine minefields is universally accepted and is currently used in de-mining operations through out the world. De-mining is an extremely hazardous and time-consuming operation. Mine recovery/breaching is being undertaken by adopting 100% safety precautions. Prevention of casualties, Army and civilians is the bedrock of this philosophy.

(c) and (d) . The land, which has been completely demined is handed over to the farmers/owners in the presence of State Government officials and village representatives. The information regarding the area of the land mined/demined cannot be disclosed for 'security' reasons.

(e) The Government has taken necessary steps to augment the existing resources with highly advanced equipment available internationally, so as to facilitate safe and expeditious completion of the on-going demining process.

Modernisation of Ordnance Factories during Tenth Plan

3422. SHRI SURENDRA LATH : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) the number of Ordnance Factories in the country;

(b) whether Government have a proposal for the modernisation and expansion of some of these factories during Tenth Plan;

(c) if so, the fund earmarked therefor; and

(d) the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL) : (a) There are 39 Ordnance Factories in the country. The 40th factory is being set at Nalanda, Bihar.